

# Make Insect Poison Of Lethal Nerve Gas

**INSECTICIDES**  
By ROY O. GILBERT, M.D., L. A. County Health Officer  
If a few commercial users of certain insecticides knew that they were using lethal nerve gases in the last war, they might remember to use a little more caution in the storage, handling, and application of these materials.

Although not ordinarily used by home gardeners, these insecticides, organic phosphates, have proved to be of great economic importance to agriculture in controlling destructive insects. They are sold under a variety of trade names, the most common of which are Parathion, TEPP, EPN, OMPA, and Demeton. The law requires that the labels show the percentage of organic phosphates in the products and all containers prominently display a list of precautions for their use.

Nevertheless, during the last few weeks two children—one in Oregon and one in California—died because these materials were stored in a manner so as to be readily accessible to children, or to anyone else for that matter. Several adults have also died in California during the past year from such poisoning.

**Kill By Touch**  
So poisonous are these organic phosphates that they kill through breathing or through contact with the skin. They can kill in one dose or they can build up a cumulative effect over a period of time. If such poisoning is discovered early, it can be treated effectively. A bulletin for physicians containing the latest information on the diagnosis and treatment of organic phosphate poisoning is being sent this week to all practicing physicians within the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Health Department.

In addition, the Department is attempting to acquaint the public with the facts concerning the proper use of all insecticides, especially since their use is increased many fold during the spring and summer months.

**Not For Home Use**  
The fact should be stressed that the insecticides causing the above mentioned deaths are not readily available for home use, but they are widely used in agriculture throughout this county.  
So much for the organic phosphates.

However, it might be said that almost all chemicals used to destroy pests can be dangerous to human beings if not used properly. Not so many years ago, there were only a few chemicals used by the farmer or home gardener to control pests or plant diseases. Most everyone at that time realized that accidental eating of the stuff was extremely dangerous, and cases of poisoning from such cause were relatively rare.

Today however, many of the newer insecticides can be absorbed through the skin as well as being ingested through the mouth, but if they are safely applied, the possibilities of poisoning are extremely remote.

**DDT safe**  
Most of these newer chemicals used primarily for home gardening and control of household pests are chlorinated hydrocarbons. Included in this group are DDT, chlordane, and lindane.

The point is that all insecticides and pest eradicators, old or new, should be handled according to the dictates of what might be called common sense. They should be stored where children cannot gain access to them and they should be placed or sprayed so that food cannot possibly become contaminated. Insofar as possible, the user or others in the vicinity should avoid breathing the spray or getting it on themselves.

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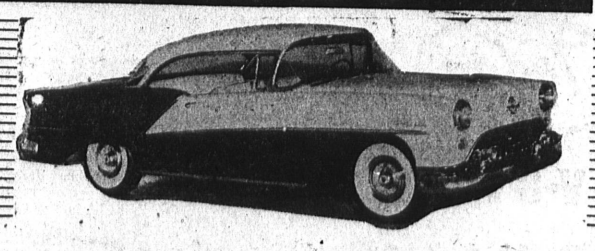
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